

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505

11 MAR 1975

The Honorable Frank Church
Chairman
Select Committee to Study Governmental
Operations with Respect to Intelligence
Activities
United States Senate
Washington, D. C. 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This letter will confirm and reduce to writing some of the matters agreed upon at our recent meeting.

At the outset, I should like to express my deep personal appreciation for the candor and helpfulness of you and Senator Tower in that meeting and for your sensitivity to the respective responsibilities under our Constitutional framework of the Select Committee and the Central Intelligence Agency in the area of your review. For my part, I should like to renew again, for myself and the CIA, my promise of cooperation with respect to the important work of the Select Committee. In my judgment, a spirit of good faith and cooperative effort is not only necessary to enable your Committee to discharge its responsibilities fully and expeditiously, but is indeed in the best interests of the intelligence community as well. I am convinced that a responsible and thorough review of U.S. intelligence activities will serve to vindicate the CIA and enhance the public's understanding of the important contribution that the intelligence efforts of this nation can make toward the goal of preserving and strengthening our democracy.

I am particularly appreciative of your recognition that certain sensitive aspects of our intelligence activities must receive special consideration and treatment by the Select Committee in the course of your work. As we discussed, such matters as the identities of our sensitive sources, the material provided to us by cooperating foreign intelligence services, the details of technical devices and systems and of operational methods, the identities of certain of our employees who could be targets of kidnapping or assassination, the identities of American citizens and organizations who have cooperated with U.S. intelligence, and some additional materials the public disclosure of which would create serious foreign policy or national security problems, should be protected not only from exposure, but indeed from the risk of exposure. We should also work together to protect certain other information which, if improperly disclosed, might impair the privacy rights of individuals. Where these kinds of considerations are present, I anticipate that appropriate understandings can be arrived at to avoid the risk of exposing such matters and at the same time to satisfy the Select Committee's need for a full understanding of our activities.

As I stated to you, employees of the Central Intelligence Agency will be available to the Select Committee for staff interviews and for testimony. As we have discussed, this might require, in some circumstances, special arrangements to protect the identity of particular employees whose physical safety or future career might be placed in jeopardy by exposure. I anticipate that suitable safeguards can be established to avoid such dangers. I assume the Committee will make its own arrangements with respect to ex-employees as to whom I no longer have the authority to direct their cooperation. However, I am available for whatever assistance I can provide in this regard.


As you are aware, all employees of the Central Intelligence Agency are required to sign a secrecy agreement when they enter on duty. This is a condition of employment, and it requires that they keep forever secret all classified information gained during the course of their employment. The secrecy agreement further requires that they may not disclose classified information, either orally or by publication, without prior authorization from the Director of Central Intelligence. Under the secrecy agreement, an employee's obligations with respect to the protection of classified information continue after his employment with the CIA has been terminated.

It is my desire that the secrecy agreements signed by our employees shall not impair the necessary work of the Select Committee. To accomplish this, and in recognition of the security protection contemplated by the Select Committee, I have determined that disclosure of otherwise protected information to the Select Committee or its designated staff members will constitute an authorized provision of information within the meaning of the secrecy agreements. This letter may be used to indicate such authorization for any Agency employee or ex-employee to furnish information to the Select Committee or appropriate staff members on matters which would otherwise be covered by their secrecy agreement, but which are not among the particularly sensitive matters such as mentioned above. With respect to those particularly sensitive matters, different procedures are obviously necessary. Accordingly, where any matter included in these sensitive categories would be involved in responding to the Committee, the employee should express his concern and, if possible, propose a way of responding to the Committee without exposing such sensitive details. If the Committee believes that a disclosure of those aspects is nevertheless necessary, the matter will be discussed between the Committee and the Agency. I am prepared to consult with the Committee at any time to avoid difficulties in this area and quickly determine together the appropriate course of action to be taken.

With the good faith evident in our discussions on these matters, I believe that these arrangements will enable me to discharge my responsibilities to protect intelligence sources and methods from unauthorized disclosure, while at the same time to provide the Select Committee with all the information it needs to accomplish its task.

As we have agreed, it is in the national interest as well as that of the Select Committee and the U.S. intelligence community to ensure that your review proceed as smoothly and as expeditiously as possible. Toward that end, I have instructed all CIA personnel to respond in a spirit of cooperation.

Sincerely,


W. E. Colby
Director